

Statement of
Rep. Ed Markey
Concerning the
Temporary Removal from Budget Reconciliation
of Drilling for Oil and Gas in the
Arctic National Wildlife Refuge
November 10, 2005

In a last ditch effort to attempt to save the budget reconciliation bill from sinking today on the House floor, the Republican leadership has temporarily thrown overboard provisions allowing drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and in the sensitive areas off our coasts in the Outer Continental Shelf.

But let us be clear – the Republican leadership has every intention of putting language allowing drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge back into this bill in conference. This drilling provision is like a bad penny – it keeps turning. All along, this Republican budget reconciliation bill has been one of the most anti-environmental bills any Congress has ever seen – that has not changed today. In fact, the only wildlife that the Republicans have protected today is the red herring – because today's bill is merely a temporary diversion, a Reconciliation Red Herring.

But what they are taking out of the bill today they fully intend to put right back in it tomorrow, so that the Bush Administration and the right-wing leadership of this Republican Congress can complete their grand plan of raising money for tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans by cutting Medicaid for poor people, selling drilling rights in national wildlife refuges and other pristine public lands, and cutting the student loans that give working-class kids a chance at the American Dream.

Ultimately, moderate Republicans may need to find a *political* refuge somewhere in Alaska, because that's where voters are likely to send them a year from now when their leadership forces them to vote to allow drilling in the Arctic Refuge. We'll all have to travel to this remote political preserve to see what a moderate Republican used to look like.

We have seen today how the Republican leadership is still scrambling to find the votes to pass this bill because cutting Medicaid, student loans, food stamp programs – programs that millions of Americans depend on – to increase the deficit by giving out \$70 billion in tax cuts to the wealthy is not a vote that moderate Republicans can make – even with drilling in the Arctic Refuge and the OCS temporarily out. Today is only further demonstrating how extreme and out of touch the Republican leadership's agenda is.